



Volume 11 Number 96

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## **HOW I ALMOST FOUGHT WORLD WAR II**

**by Bob Appelbaum**

In December of 1944, I got off of a troopship in Le Havre, France, and marched up a hill to a railroad yard, where I was loaded into a freight car with a bunch of other rookies. We took off on a trip which took us close enough to Paris to see the Eiffel Tower, but wound up in Givet, a town where the Meuse River crossed the border between France and Belgium.

We de-trained, and, after a hot meal, were paired off with veteran infantrymen and led to a field where we were told to dig in, because a Panzer division was on its way to try to take the bridge at Givet.

Panzers, I thought, isn't that like TANKS, with CANNONS and MACHINE GUNS? And I have a rifle and four hand grenades. Digging in seemed like a good idea—maybe they wouldn't see me.

Well, the Panzers never showed up—the fight that the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division put up at Bastogne cut off the Panzers' fuel supply, and they ran out of gas.

So, after a week or so in a hole in the ground, we got a hot bath, a hot meal, and a warm place to sleep before being loaded into boxcars and shipped to Barneville, in Normandy.

Now, we were told, we were part of the 474<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment (Separate), which had, as its Third Battalion, the 99<sup>th</sup> Norwegian Battalion (made up of Norwegian citizens). We were to train for an invasion of Norway and were being given the honor, because of our Norwegian Battalion, of spearheading the invasion.

Surely, I thought, there must be someone more deserving of these honors than me. But, no, it was me in that rubber boat, rowing up to a cliff and trying to climb it with a hundred pounds of stuff hanging on me.

After about a month of war games, we were once again assembled on a parade ground and told that the invasion of Norway had been called off, because it looked like the war was almost over. We were now the Counter Intelligence Corps Striking Force. This meant that if the Counter Intelligence Corps needed some shooting done, they would call on us, and we would show up like a posse in a cowboy movie.

On a beautiful April day in 1945, while we were camped on a hillside overlooking the Danube River, the news came in that the war was over. Just as we were starting to celebrate, word came down that a group of die-hard Nazis were holed up in the Bavarian Alps, calling it the Bavarian Redoubt and preparing to fight to the death.

Who better to go after them than us, with all of our training climbing cliffs? We were packing up to go mountain climbing when we got the word, "false alarm," and heard about our next job.

When the Germans surrendered, there were 400,000 of their naval, air force and army personnel stranded in Norway, and a joint British-American task force was being formed to round them all up and ship them back to Germany. Of course, with our Third Battalion being Norwegian, we were chosen to go along. We were the first

allied troops to get to Norway, so we were greeted with great joy, showers of flowers and kisses from beautiful blondes.

Everything went smoothly with the repatriation of the Germans, except for the night when some Polish slave laborers got hold of some guns and attacked an internment camp full of Germans. We found ourselves defending our enemies from our allies.

My military career ended when I had a non-combat but service-connected injury that caused the loss of half of my right elbow. A grateful Government sends me a nice monthly check to compensate me for its loss.

A final ironic twist to my military career came about when a house fire destroyed my Combat Infantry Badge. I wrote the Army and asked if I could get a replacement. They wrote back and told me that a replacement was on its way, and, furthermore, that General George Marshall, having noticed the imbalance between officers and enlisted men in the number of medals received, had decreed that all holders of the Combat Infantry Badge would get a Bronze Star. So I made a little frame to hold my war souvenirs and have it displayed alongside our wedding picture.

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**AN AUDLAND TREE  
IN AUTUMN**  
by Marjorie Burns

A tree, standing in the Audland  
courtyard  
Between the gracefully curved line of  
even-numbered doors  
And the stiff, unbending line of the  
odd-numbered,  
Addressed its leaves:  
“My dears, this cold wind blowing in  
from Blustery Benson  
Tells me I must soon let you fall.”

In a sudden crescendo of dry rustling  
The leaves asked fearfully:  
“Oh, please, what will become of us?”

“You will be driven by the wind  
Straight to A-114  
And heaped up against the door.  
There, perhaps, the Woodmans,  
Models of all that is even-tempered  
and even-handed,  
May let some of you in,  
Accidentally.”

Audland trees are sturdy,  
dispassionate, and wise,  
Like all trees.

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**FICTION**  
**THE WORKER**  
by Ann Baker

A block from the New Projects, five  
children ran across the icy street in

front of Edith Cooper’s car. They  
looked neither left nor right but  
pointed their faces forward and  
judged the traffic by intuition only.  
Edith pulled up near the curb to give  
them a lecture in pedestrian safety.  
Leaning way over, she rolled down  
her passenger window.

“Kids!” she said, “You forgot to look  
both ways! Right? The street is so  
slippery! What if a car was coming  
just like I was and couldn’t stop?”

The tallest girl was in charge of the  
others on their way home from  
school. She studied Edith with a face  
half-hidden inside the hood of her  
parka.

“There go your teacher, Brian,” she  
said.

“You crazy, girl? No she ain’t.”

“She look like your teacher. She could  
be your teacher.”

Brian stared in outrage. “No she  
don’t!”

A smaller boy said, “She’s not *my*  
teacher, ‘cause my teacher’s real  
pretty.”

To make her point, Edith acted out  
looking both ways by turning her  
head. “First you look up the street like  
this. Okay? Then down the street like  
this. And then you have to wait until  
nothing’s coming.” This illustrated  
with a slow head-shake.

The smaller boy grinned. "I know. You is a worker!"

"I'm cold," Brian said, and they all started off again down the sidewalk. Only the smallest turned to flap a mitten.

She had been a Child Protective Caseworker for three years, a middle-aged woman hired by Sheffield County Department of Social Services after scoring high on the civil service exam. Her goal when she started out was to do good, to make a difference, and she still stuck by that although it had turned out to be harder (more "problematic," as they say in social services, meaning full of problems) than she ever expected.

The goal of social justice stuck in her mind like a bone in her throat. She would get agitated when a topic like, for instance, welfare, came up. "It's complicated," she would start in, trying to stay calm in conversations with Lucian Cooper who was her husband, trying to be reasonable at the social functions they attended. "I mean the results of Basic Assistance can be, sometimes are, you know, problematic. . . ."

And then if she went on to explain something about how people on welfare actually did take responsibility for their lives, a kind of responsibility, and that they might reasonably be expected to take more given the right circumstances; or how

we must perhaps acknowledge that, in truth, the liberal social agenda hasn't been a total, hundred percent success, the conversation turned into one kind of disaster: the liberals, those few left, looking at her like she was a roach, while the conservatives slit their eyes and nodded knowingly as they stood around in their Gucci shoes. Or, if she argued the other side and made a positive case for social programs, some being better than others, it turned into a disaster of another sort: the liberals' eyes getting wet and glittery to show how caring they were, while conservatives, even lovable ones like Lucian, began their tedious rants about personal responsibility and the work ethic.

No help for it but to clutch her glass of wine and seltzer wrapped in damp shreds of paper napkin and try not to provoke an outburst, try not to have one herself.

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## **THE WIDE BLUE YONDER**

**by Kay Silberfeld**

It was not an auspicious beginning. It had rained the night before, and when I reached my exit sooner than expected, I had to swerve abruptly off of the highway. The car skidded on the wet exit road and didn't come to a halt until the middle of a large field. The only after-effects, aside from my

shakes, were the grasses festooning the car.

I was on my way to the first meeting of a two-day course for “pinch-hitters.” It was for people like myself who often flew as a passenger in a small plane. If the pilot were to become indisposed, I would be able to fly the plane to an airport and land it. (The planes we used, Cessna 172’s, had dual controls and could be flown from the passenger seat).

In the morning classes, “ground-school,” we were lectured on airplane mechanics: how the plane lifts off, how it flies and why it stays up. I hoped that once I understood how planes worked, I would, at the least, be a less fearful passenger.

The afternoons were for the actual flying lessons, and for this activity, each student was assigned a teacher. Mine, Tom, was a retired professional pilot. In order for me to become familiar with the controls, he began my lesson on a simulator. Then on to the real thing. Tom did the take-off, and once we reached a safe altitude, he told me to fly the plane! Of course, he kept his hands hovering over the controls while I even did, tentatively, some turns. (Maybe I could become an actual pilot?)

The months went by, and once a week I had a flying lesson. These included numerous take-offs, using the amazing world-wide system of

navigation and communication, and even deliberately putting the plane into a spin in order to learn how to get it back to a safe altitude. Through it all, Tom was there to take over if needed, and when he was at the controls, the plane flew gracefully, and it felt as if we were part of the wind and the sky. An additional pleasure was having lunch with a pilot friend of Tom’s and listening to their flying stories, known as “hangar talk.”

After maybe a year into the lessons, I asked Tom if I could sit in the real pilot’s seat on the left side of the plane. No more of this pinch-hitter stuff! Now I could more readily pretend I was an actual pilot! However, there was a catch: I had yet to land the plane without assistance. And I never did.

I would do the approach, announce to the “tower,” get into position for the final leg, start gently down, but seeing the nose of my plane heading into the runway, I would panic. (My pilot friend Frank suggested that I visualize a bird landing. Even that didn’t help.) Another reason I could not fly by myself was my limited understanding of the plane’s mechanisms. I was not sure I would know what to do if something went wrong.

In the meantime, with the increase in my flying knowledge, I think I became a better passenger for Frank. He and I had some wonderful day trips in all different directions from

our home airport in Gaithersburg, MD: beautiful flights across the Chesapeake Bay or down along the Sky Line Drive in Virginia, day trips which included landing some place for lunch.

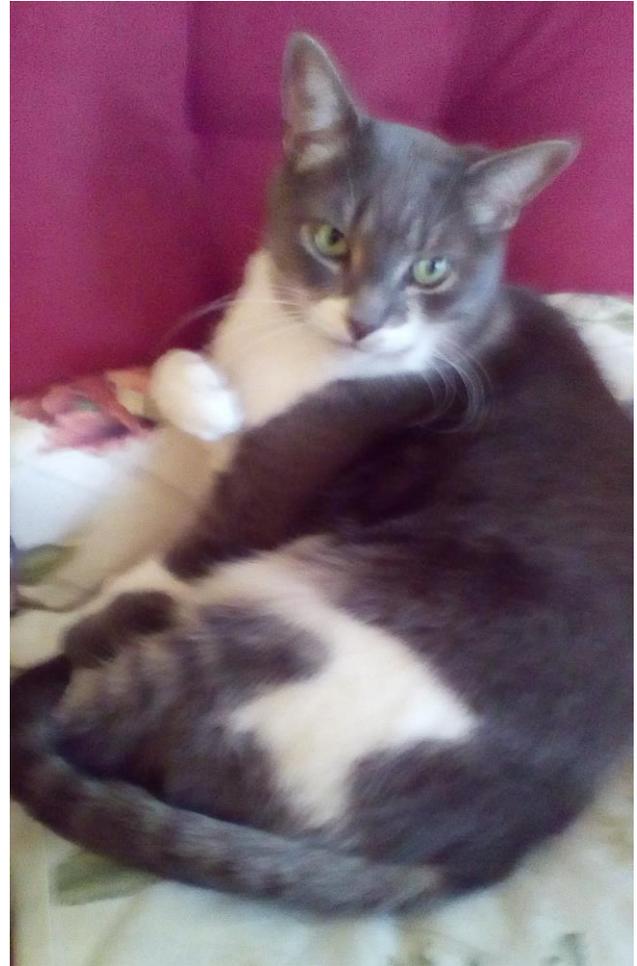
At some point, Frank got his instrument license. Now, rather than flying using landmarks, he could navigate by depending solely on the plane's instruments. Up we went into the clouds. It was visually spectacular, but I was always relieved when we emerged on the other side and were still right side up, and on the same flight pattern!

My flying lessons went on for about six years and only ended because Tom moved away. It had been a wonderful adventure, despite a problem I don't think I admitted to him: my agoraphobia. With this fear of open spaces, it's hard for me to believe that I used to fly in such a tiny plane, and that I ever dreamt about being up there in that huge expanse of sky all by myself!

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## **A FELINE VOICE**

*Note: Village Voices is always looking for new views about what life is like at Pennswood. Here's Lynne Waymon's exclusive interview with family member Chester Tweedsmere Waymon.*



### **Where are you from?**

I was born in Chester Basin, Nova Scotia, hence my name. The Tweedsmere part is from my crazy Auntie Anne Baber who likes to name things. Nova Scotia is where my sister, Petunia, and I found Todd and Lynne. When I met Todd, right away I could see he was my kind of human. Before any of the other kittens had a chance to, I climbed up into his lap to claim him.

**What's your favorite time of day?**

In addition to meal times? Before bedtime, when Todd sits on the rug with me, and we have a little guy time while he scratches my back.

**Who's the boss—you or your sister Petunia?**

With a name like Petunia, I'm surprised you even have to ask!

**If you went to Ben Hoyle's meeting, what would you want to say?**

About the dogs! They get entirely too much visibility! Always prancing around, cozing up to people. It's undignified. And that dog park! Don't get me started! Not that we cats would want one. If you're asking, we'd like an aerial jungle gym traversing the whole 82 acres. Let's put that in the strategic plan!

**How's the health care at Pennswood?**

Overactive! Every 6 weeks, Pet Mobile comes to cut my claws. Who invited them? Not me!

**What's your biggest frustration living here?**

The squirrels! They climb the window screens knowing I can't get to them. That kind of hubris will have serious consequences one day.

**Tell us more about your sister Petunia.**

Lynne spoils her, saying things like, "You're not a Rose. You're not an Iris. You're not a Marigold. You're just our sweet little Petunia." But it's nice to have her around because she licks my ears.

**What are your favorite activities?**

Finding good places to nap. Then napping. And sitting between Todd and Lynne, so I have two people to pet me at once while I nap.

**Least favorite activities?**

Fire drills! Need I say more? Doesn't anybody think about our sensitive ears? Oh, and every Thursday morning, I have to manage the Housekeepers all by myself because Petunia is a fraidy cat and hides behind the dryer.

**What do you do when Lynne and Todd are out?**

Break all the rules. Way too many rules! Don't scratch the furniture. Don't get on the table. Don't sit on the computer keyboard. Don't bite Petunia. I'm a free spirit. I need a little room to express myself. If Lynne and Todd are gone for a long time, Jane Perkinson and Will Reid, our neighbors come over to visit. That's nice. Will says he's in charge of my "moral development." For instance, he doesn't think I should eat Petunia's food. (Why not?) I let him think I'm making progress. I think it makes him feel good.

### **Anything else you'd like to say?**

You can come visit if you like.  
Petunia will hide. I'll sniff you and  
see if you know anything about how  
to pet a cat. I used to do party tricks  
with a ping pong ball, but that was  
when I was younger. Now I just  
quote Euripides: "The good and the  
wise lead quiet lives."

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## **THE WAITING OCEAN**

**by Marguerite Chandler**

Where does the ocean go when the  
children leave?  
It waits, calm, empty, and quiet,  
waves lapping the shore.  
Where do the beaches go when winter  
cold covers the sand with ice and  
snow?  
It waits, waiting for sun and sand  
shovels and running bare feet.  
Where do the sand crabs go when the  
winds blow and the waves crash?  
They wait, waiting for calm breezes  
and sun.  
Where do the shore birds go when the  
leaves fall and the winds blow?  
They fly, fleeing the cold in great  
flocks,  
calling and chasing like children at  
play.  
Where do the dolphins and whales go  
when the oceans warm and the  
days grow long?  
They travel, swimming thousands of  
miles, to return to the beaches  
where the children play and laugh.

And where do the children go when  
the school days end and crickets  
and fireflies appear once more?  
They go to the beach with their beach  
balls and buckets, shovels and  
sand castle dreams.

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## **FRENCH: ROOT PROBLEMS**

**by Leslie Wendel**

After years of French in high school  
and college, I thought I was prepared  
for living in France on our sabbatical  
in 1977. I was wrong—very wrong.

I may have learned a lot of French,  
but I didn't learn the right things.

In six months of living in France, no  
one ever asked about "the pen of my  
aunt" or "the crayon of my uncle."  
My high school French teacher, Miss  
Reed, had given me the impression  
that such things were the main stuff of  
conversation from Paris to Marseilles.

In college French classes, we  
analyzed the poems of Rimbaud and  
Baudelaire and read the plays of  
Racine and Molière.

But knowing 19th-Century classical  
French poetry doesn't help a bit when  
you are trying to explain to a 20th-  
Century French plumber about how  
the sink in your apartment is "creating  
water very deep everywhere on the

floor.” And, familiarity with Molière is of no assistance whatsoever when you’re trying to tell a French veterinarian’s receptionist, over the phone, that you know your dog is very sick because “his dinner has been throwing up all over the rug.”

I should have been taught the things I really needed to know to live in a French-speaking country, things like: how to talk to a garage mechanic about the car which “does not march because something on the box which cleans the air has disappeared.” Or, how to explain to my landlord that I had “unfortunately illuminated too many bulbs of the lamps” and blown a fuse—again.

Knowing a few medical terms might have been helpful also. I’m sure I could have found an English-speaking dentist—in Paris. But I was living 180 miles from Paris, in rural Burgundy, when I had a severe toothache, caused by a gum infection.

When I checked my dictionary before visiting the dentist, I learned that *gomme*, the word I thought I wanted, was an art gum eraser. *Gensive* was the kind of gum that, as I told the dentist, was “causing me great pain all the hours of the day.”

It’s very difficult to remember to shout *là* instead of “there” when a French dentist is poking about in your mouth with a sharp probe and asking

“where does it hurt?”

It was on the third visit to the dentist that communication really broke down. I didn’t understand him when he told me what the treatment would be. He then patiently explained that he had to give me anesthesia because it was necessary to *enlever* the nerve of my tooth.

*Enlever?* I wasn’t sure, but I thought *enlever* might mean “to raise up.” That didn’t make sense. “I don’t understand the verb you have used,” I told the dentist.

And then I remembered something—headlines in the French newspapers when a German industrialist had been kidnapped. *Enlever* was the verb in the headlines.

It meant “kidnap,” I realized. He’s going to “kidnap, remove, take out” the nerve from my tooth!

If only Miss Reed had taught us the words for “root canal filling.”

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## **OUT OF THE MOUTHS . . .** **by Henry Martin**

In 1950, I was out of college and after completing two years at an art school in Chicago had moved East. My future wife, Edie, was then teaching

faculty children at the University of Illinois in Urbana. She had invited me to come visit her, see her school, and meet her friends and wonderful preschool pupils.

I flew to Chicago from Newark Airport and then caught a train to Urbana. On Monday morning, I found myself with Edie in her class of about 15 very bright and eager youngsters. When I entered the room, half of the children were painting at easels, wearing smocks made from their fathers' hand-me-down shirts. I sidled up to a little girl who was painting a scene of a house in winter and was daubing the paper with dots of white paint.

Hoping to get a conversation going, I said, "That's snow, isn't it?" With a mischievous smile, she replied, "No, it's white paint."

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## AN OLD-FASHIONED PLEASURE

If you'd like to slow down and savor some interesting ideas clothed in clever words, we've got just the thing. Twice a year, Pennswoodians gather to read (and listen to) bits of poetry and prose. This event is enthusiastically sponsored by *Village Voices*.

You are cordially invited to be either a reader or a listener—or both.

If you'd like to read, please follow the instructions in the Bulletin to get on the program. October 2nd is the last day to sign up.

If you'd like to be in the audience, put this information on your calendar.

### Poetry & Prose

7 p.m. Penn Hall

Thursday, October 12

Publication of  
**Pennswood Village  
Residents Association**  
**Founder and Editor Emerita:**  
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